**How Communism Took Over Eastern Europe After World War II**

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*An interview with Anne Applebaum about her new book,*The Crushing of Eastern Europe



Soviet-built tanks wheel into action in a smoke-filled Budapest street during Hungary's rebellion against communist satellite government in October of 1956. (AP)

In a long-awaited history due to be published this week, journalist and author Anne Applebaum draws on firsthand accounts and previously unpublished archival material to describe how the Kremlin established its hegemony over Eastern Europe at the end of World War II. The book, titled [*Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe*](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/iron-curtain-anne-applebaum/1112690534), 1944-56, explores the gutting of local institutions and the murders, terror campaigns, and tactical maneuvering that allowed Moscow to establish a system of control that would last for decades to come. I spoke with, Applebaum, whose previous book, a history of the Soviet Gulag, won the Pulitzer Prize.

**Your book concentrates on three countries -- East Germany, Hungary, and Poland. What made you choose them in particular?**I chose those three precisely because they are so different and they just had extremely different experiences of war. Germany obviously was Nazi Germany, Hungary had been a country somewhat in-between, a sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy ally of Hitler, and of course Poland was an ally and very actively [involved in the fight against Hitler.]

So therefore there were three countries with different recent histories and what interested me was the fact that despite those cultural differences, despite the linguistic differences, despite the recent political history, by about the year 1950 if you'd looked in at this region from the outside, they would have all appeared very similar.